REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

New Claim 14 finds support in Original Claim 6 and in the specification as originally filed. See, e.g., specification pages 15-17 and the Examples. New Claim 15 is supported at specification page 16, lines 10-14. New claim 16 is supported by Claim 15 and by original Claim 10. No new matter has been entered.

The references applied against the claims do not disclose a process as set forth in Claim 14 where a purified resist polymer solution having 1 mass% or less of certain impurities is produced by dissolving a solid product comprising a resist polymer having a repeating unit decomposable by, and becoming alkali-soluble by, the action of an acid and a polar group-containing repeating unit, in a solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of a solvent for coating-film formation, and evaporating from the solution the solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of the solvent for coating-film formation while adding, under reduced pressure with the temperature being controlled at 70°C or less, a solvent for coating-film formation to produce a purified resist polymer solution. As shown in Tables 1 and 2 herein:

TABLE 1

		Example			Comparative Example		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Composition	NLM		37			37	
of charged	NLA	50		Million Control	50		annothing and
materials	EAM	50	***************************************	18	50		18
(mol %)	ECpM	**************************************	34	- Anna Carlos	*****	34	
	HAM		29	-	*********	29	***************************************
	PHS	THE PARTY OF THE P		82	and the particular of the part		82
Impurity-removing method		Present	Present	Present	Vacuum	Vacuum	Vacuum
• •		invention	invention	invention	drying	drying	drying
Maximum vacuum (kPa)		0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Highest temperature (° C.)		49	50	54	75	75	75
Time period of process (hr)		6	6	6	72	72	72

TABLE 2

		Example			Comparative Example			
		1	2	3	1	2	3	
Composition	NLM		40			40		
determined by NMR	NLA	50	mayor demonstra		50			
analysis (mol %)	EAM	50	waspearce	20	50		20	
	ECpM		30	-	Vermount	30		
	HAM	announce .	30	**************************************	Andreador	30		
	PHS		*******	80	-	Name of Street, Street	80	
	MA + AA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.4	
GPC analysis	Mw	8,400	11,600	13,100	8,500	11,500	13,000	
•	Mw/Mn	2.04	1.82	1.85	2.05	1.83	1.86	
Low-boiling-point	Organic	0.3	0.3	0.2	3.7	7.5	6.3	
impurities (mass %)	materials							
	Water	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.7	

the presently claimed method is capable of producing resist polymer solutions having dramatically improved properties with regard to impurity amounts, while using lower temperatures and less time than conventional methods. Although not bound by theory, it is believed that the presently claimed process avoids the decomposition of acid-decomposable repeating units that occurs in the prior art and thereby provides very low levels of impurities in the final product, using a process that is substantially more efficient.

For example, <u>Jung</u> uses precipitation and then vacuum drying (see, e.g., Preparation Example 8 at col. 10 of the reference), in a fashion similar to the comparative Examples described in Tables 1 and 2 above. <u>Kawabe</u> also uses vacuum drying (see, e.g., the synthesis of Resin R-1 at paragraph [0192], while <u>Tazaki</u> appears to simply wash the products (see, e.g., col. 12, lines 32-38 and the paragraph bridging cols. 14-15).

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Because the references applied against the claims do not disclose or suggest a method as presently claimed, the outstanding rejections should be withdrawn and this case passed to Issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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